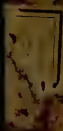


286
96
60
py 1



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Chap. E286

Shelf P96

1860

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

AND

CITIZENS OF PROVIDENCE,

ON THE EIGHTY-FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF

AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE,

JULY 4, 1860.

✓
BY THOMAS M. CLARK, D. D.



PROVIDENCE:
KNOWLES, ANTHONY & CO., CITY PRINTERS.
1860.

E 286

. P 96

1860

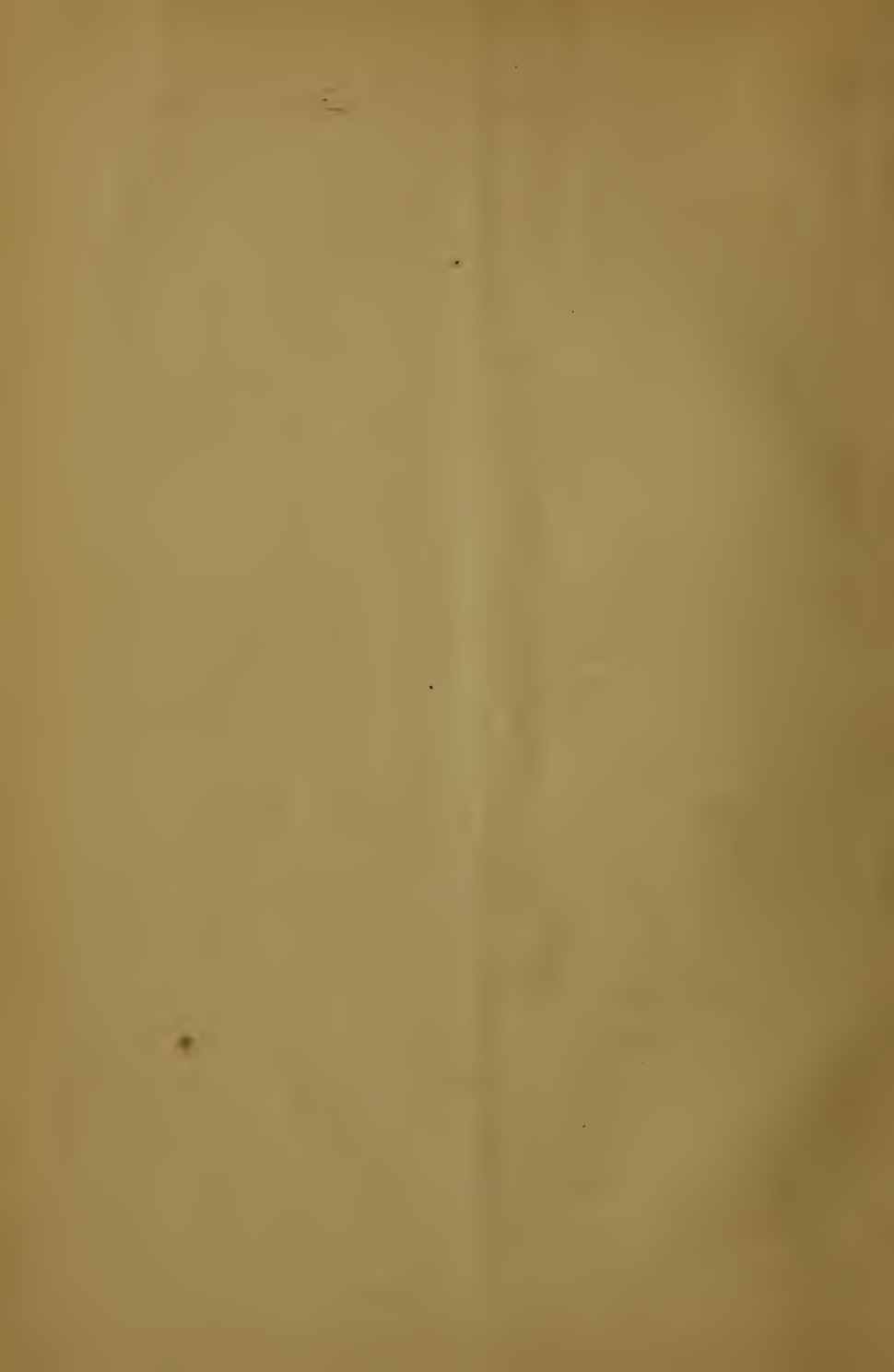
CITY OF PROVIDENCE.

BY THE CITY COUNCIL, July 9, 1860—

Resolved, That the Committee appointed to make arrangements for the Municipal Celebration of the anniversary of American Independence, be and they are hereby authorized to request of the Right Rev. Thomas M. Clark, a copy of the Oration by him delivered on the fourth instant, and to cause seven hundred and fifty copies of the same to be published in pamphlet form for the use of the City Council.

A true copy : attest,

SAMUEL W. BROWN,
City Clerk.



ORATION.

FELLOW CITIZENS :

We have assembled to celebrate the birth-day of the nation. It will be a most unfortunate token when this anniversary shall be degraded to the purposes of political strife, or prostituted to the orgies of bacchanalian revelry. Let it forever be regarded as a great national Sabbath of joy and thanksgiving; let all servile labor be suspended, all narrow partizanship forgotten, all distinctions of rank laid aside, and the people everywhere come together, as children of the same household, to recognize their common brotherhood, and join heart and voice in one lofty anthem of grateful praise. Let the banner of freedom wave from every hill top, every bell ring out its merry chimes, garlands of flowers be hung on all our public monuments; let drum and trumpet fill the air with music, while cannons thunder from Maine to California, and the whole land smokes with the incense of joy. Let no man feel himself exempt from

the solemn obligation to hallow this sacred festival ; teach your children to-day the lesson of liberty ; pray for the oppressed, here and everywhere ; let in light upon the dark dwellings of the poor ; cast out the demons of bigotry, to roam in desert places ; and open wide the door for the bright angel of peace and love to enter in and take up his abode with men.

There are memories connected with this occasion, which impart to the day a peculiar sanctity. They are very familiar, almost common-place—those old stories of the Revolution, hardships of winter campaigns ; forced marches under the sweltering heat of a summer's sun ; hunger and thirst and sickness of an ill-paid and ill-provided army ; sacrifice of temporal goods ; long separations of parents and children, husbands and wives ; groans and agonies of wounded men in rattling tumbrils ; pale faces on the battle-field, turned up to the cold moonlight, that will never smile upon the little ones at home again—familiar, common-place, only fit for a Fourth of July oration, we may call all this, as we complacently gather in our rich harvests from the soil which our fathers' blood made fruitful. No doubt that a mythical halo has gathered about our revolutionary heroes, and we begin to forget their frailties ; as far off mountains are glorified by the distance, and all their roughness and barrenness are softened into a cloud of violet : let it be so,—let no man disturb the grand ideal which the world

by common consent has agreed to reverence. I never saw, in our civic processions, the carriage which conveyed the old soldiers of the Revolution, without a feeling of respectful awe. They were, perhaps, rather ordinary men in their common relations, not over nice either in dress or speech, and perhaps nothing but their pension kept some of them out of a poor house; but I venerated them still, as mossy, mouldered monuments of one of the sublimest movements ever known on earth. I do not know but they have all passed away now; for years the newspapers have periodically announced the last surviving soldier of the Revolution gone, and he may have gone at last. If so, hallowed be the turf that covers his mortal tenement, and may God have received his soul into the mansions of everlasting rest.

There are circumstances connected with our coming into being as a nation, which indicate for us a peculiar destiny. It was not until the world was ripe, that we were born. We were spared the long infancy of barbarism, through which older nations struggled to their maturity. The close of the eighteenth century was the most favorable period for establishing a republic upon broad and liberal principles, ever known in history. The true elements of government, the inherent rights of man, the laws of political economy, were better understood than ever before. Physical phenomena had just escaped from the nebulous regions of alchemy and astrology, and were

passing into the domain of science, thus preparing the way for the wonderful inventions and discoveries which have been crowded into the last half century. A rational, inductive philosophy had recently superseded the metaphysics of dreaming schoolmen; the claims of universal education were, for the first time in the history of the world, recognized and reduced to practice; books were growing cheaper, newspapers began to be circulated, post offices established, public conveyances to run; the means and appliances of physical comfort more generally distributed, the food, and clothing, and furniture, and dwelling-houses of the people at large were better than they had been; and above all, a clearer view of Christianity, in its practical application to the real necessities of men, now prevailed. We had the benefit of nearly six thousand years experience to guide us in framing our institutions; all the successes and all the failures of all the ancient monarchies and republics to help us; is it a weak conceit to infer that our Constitution was wiser than all?

Consider, also, the advantages of our geographical position. Separated by two oceans from the encroachments of the old world, the contaminating influence of its effete institutions, and the debilitating effects of its over-ripe luxury; with such a reach of territory, that while the ice still fetters the streams and snow enshrouds the fields in one extreme, roses bloom and the magnolia

gives out its rich perfume in the other ; with such variety of soil and climate that, if it were necessary, we could raise all we need, without recourse to any foreign supply, with no political power north or south of our territory, that we have cause to fear,—the only question being how soon and how rapidly is it expedient for us to take measures for the *annexation* of our neighbors ; are we foolish in supposing that Providence intends that we should accomplish some great destiny, and solve some mighty problem in government and religion ? And what sort of men were they who first established themselves on these American shores ? They were not angels, as the aborigines, whom they so speedily exterminated, can testify ; they held, as a class, no such notions of religious liberty as poetry assigns to them ; but still they were real men, strong men, good men,—perhaps not fully rounded and symmetrical in their characters,—not exactly the type of men that we would wish to see perpetuated and made universal,—men rather to be venerated than loved, never to be ashamed of ; just the men to hew down forests, and lay broad and deep the foundations of a nation.

One sad thought will intrude itself here, and that is the heavy loss which their success entailed upon the original inhabitants of our soil. There were elements of nobleness in those Indian races, which the European settler ought to have recognized and respected ; there

were rights of possession inherent in those tribes, which should have been more sacredly regarded; we owe a debt to the people whom we have dispossessed, which we have been too reluctant to pay, and every year it is accumulating against us. Can nothing be done to save the little remnant that remain? Must they be left to the tender mercies of border-ruffians, who combine in their persons the worst features of barbarism with the meanest and lowest vices of a pseudo-civilization? Must the nation go on, paying the cost of wars which are waged for no other purpose but to get possession of the Indian territory by exterminating its owner? The wrongs of this people, past wrongs and present wrongs, cry to Heaven against us. There are laws for their protection, but they are not executed. Would that public sentiment might be roused from its apathy, and that in season; or else the last vestige of the red man's wigwam will be swept from the face of the earth.

They were sturdy and stout-hearted Saxons, who first planted here the institutions of free civilization.

And still it was most fortunate for us that they were not allowed, *in the beginning*, to establish on this continent independent States, but were obliged to remain for a season as colonies, subject to the sovereignty of a foreign power. Under any other condition of things than that which actually existed, how would it ever have been possible to form such a great federal Republic as is

now constituted by these United States? If the colonies had been independent, Congregationalism would have been recognized as the established religion throughout New England; Presbyterianism in New York; Episcopacy in Virginia; and most probably the Roman Catholic faith in Maryland. This, of itself, would have been a perpetual bar to confederated union. And what probability is there that in the beginning, these separate States would have formed themselves into republics at all? One little colony,—the least of all,—by the very terms of its settlement, would have stood alone, free from all ecclesiastical constraint, and acknowledging the unrestricted right of the people to govern themselves; but with Massachusetts on one side, and Connecticut on the other, how long would Rhode Island and the Providence Plantations have retained an independent existence? Nothing but the protection of the King and Council in England saved our little territory from being crushed to death between those two more powerful colonies. One debt of gratitude the State of Rhode Island owes to the mother country as we still delight to call her, notwithstanding the wrongs which have sundered us from all allegiance to her crown, and it is only just that we should acknowledge it to-day. And while we protest against the encroachments of George the Third and his ministers, we would not forget that even then, there were many noble hearts in England that throbbed

in unison with ours, and manly voices that were lifted up in our behalf in her Parliament; and we rejoice that for so many prosperous years, the stars and stripes of America have floated in amity with the red cross of Britain over the same broad decks; and that while the child has never ceased to love the mother, the mother has learned at last to honor the child. May it be so forever. It would be as ungenerous for us to harbor ill thoughts of the old country from which we sprung, as it would be for her to be jealous of the prosperity of her offspring, in which she so richly shares: let our only rivalry hereafter be in seeing which can do the most to civilize and Christianize the world.

And now we come to the question, what are the problems which, in the Providence of God, it is devolved upon us to solve?

First, whether it is possible for a people to govern themselves, under no other restraints but those constitutional restrictions, which they have deliberately imposed upon themselves? In the ages that are past, every experiment of this sort has failed; the ancient republics, in the very height of their splendor, when art and science and literature had culminated, went down, like a ship under full sail, foundering in the sea. It is predicted that such will be our fate; that this constitutional government, of which we are so proud, must result eventually either in anarchy, or a military despotism. We

are told that it is only the sparseness of our population, and the ease with which people at large are thus enabled to secure a comfortable living, which now saves our institutions from destruction; that it is folly to expect there will be found intelligence and virtue enough in the mass of any large population to render them competent to the solemn duties which a republican government demands of them; and that the facilities which this general suffrage gives to the ambitious demagogue must sooner or later prove fatal. Even the wiser and better men among our politicians, we are further told, must in a measure demean themselves, if they would win the popular heart; you cannot carry an election, without resorting to some unworthy device, raising some ridiculous cry, getting up some vulgar nickname for the candidates, lying in one way here and in the opposite way there; you do not dare to leave any great question to be decided by the popular voice simply according to its merits, because you know that the ignorant multitude, who hold the balance of power, are not competent to form an opinion upon the real point at issue.

It is sad to hear all this; it is sadder to fear that it may have some foundation in truth. For if the experiment of a republic fail here,—that beautiful ideal of government, in treating of which, even philosophy has glowed with poetic fire;—if it fail here, with all the advantages which our antecedents give us; if it fail here,

when we have the opportunity to test the problem more fairly than was ever possible before in any age or land ; when, where, and how can it ever again be hopefully renewed ? And must we say to the oppressed and down-trodden nations abroad, who are looking to our example and our success for encouragement,—waiting anxiously for the time when they may point to these United States in proof that human beings as a class are competent to govern themselves by such rulers as they see fit to elect, and by such laws as their chosen legislators may enact, without the burden and annoyance of a great standing army, without the impoverishing cost of a jewelled court and throne ; must we say to those noble spirits who to-day are struggling so earnestly and manfully, in Southern Europe, to extricate themselves from the political and priestly vampires who have sucked their blood so long, who are working so hard that they may be able to say to the husbandman: Now go on, sow and reap your fields without fear, the harvest shall be your own ; to the artisan : Hammer and stitch, and ply your loom with a merry heart, the bread which you earn shall go to feed your children, and no foreign mercenary ; to the thinker, the writer and the speaker: Give forth your own thoughts, utter your real belief, give to the world boldly that with which the Almighty has inspired you, there are no more dungeons gaping for you ; must we cry mournfully across the Atlantic to these great patriots :

Your case is hopeless, if you succeed in your present effort, the people whom you hope to benefit, will only be worse off in the end ; sheath your sword, furl your banners, let the trumpet peal of freedom that you have sounded fall into a coronach of wailing ; flee for your lives, and let the yoke be welded once more about the necks of the people ; they are only fit to be driven ; only fit to work in the harness ; leave them to the mercy of the coronetted and anointed drovers, who, by divine right, are appointed to care for them. Must we say this ?
GOD FORBID !

Let us, however, try to look fairly at our present position, and see what are the unfavorable as well as the favorable portents in our political horizon. There always have been two great parties dividing the nation, and it is well that it should be so ; for in a republic, any body of men in power will need the watchful check of an opposition out of power. But it is a very unpropitious circumstance that this party division has of late years become sectional, and is made to hinge almost exclusively upon the most delicate and difficult question that has ever agitated our councils. The old party issues seem to be utterly forgotten ; one topic has become the rallying cry in our elections, and the most prominent subject of Congressional debate ; and that a subject which, twenty-five years ago, was rarely alluded to by our legislators, and was never heard of at the

polls. It appears at present to be the only matter about which there is any very prominent national difference of opinion; and if it were not for this vexed question of slavery, it is difficult to conceive upon what ground our leading political parties could divide.

Within the memory of many whom I address to-day, no man would have dared to rise in his place in the Capital at Washington, and utter menaces against the sacred Union of our States. Have you forgotten what a shudder ran through society, when it was first announced that certain persons had begun "to calculate the value of the Union?" We had been trained to think that its value could not be calculated, that it was not a matter for calculation, that it was too sacred, hallowed by too many precious memories, knit together by too many tender ties, to allow any *calculation* of its worth; our fathers had fought together, prayed together, and died together in the Revolution; there was no North and South then; the bones of Rhode Island's choicest son lie buried to-day under the turf of Georgia; the statue of WASHINGTON stands serene in the capital of Massachusetts as well as in the capital of Virginia—North and South Virginia the colonies were once lovingly called—and shall we talk of *disunion*? Shall we rend the flag under which our illustrious ancestors marched forth to victory? It makes us hopeful to remember that we have already survived so many event-

ful crises, as they were deemed at the time. Nobody now seems to care for those old matters which once filled the political horizon with storm-clouds; they can be talked over almost anywhere, without stirring any ill blood; even the Hartford Convention disturbs no one's dreams, and it has become a sort of fashion to worship Gen. JACKSON, who broke up the Bank and removed the Deposits, and made South Carolina behave herself; good people, who once voted against him, and worked against him, prayed against him, are not unfrequently heard to express a wish that we had him back again, to administer a little wholesome correction in high quarters. But we are now dealing with a question more vital, more difficult to adjust than bank or tariff; it is a question of morals as well as economy, and it is the complication of these two elements, which makes it so delicate and so dangerous. I do not intend to inflict upon you a treatise on the subject of slavery. I do not think it is a proper time for it; neither would I abuse the occasion by saying a word that will be justly offensive to either of the political parties that divide us; but this opinion you must allow me to express—that in this present crisis, which is a very serious one, I consider it as a cause of hearty congratulation that, inasmuch as we must have two or more great parties in the North, we are also likely to have two parties at the South. Whoever succeeds in the approaching Presidential campaign, whether it be

the sturdy, honest, strong-hearted LINCOLN, or the energetic, powerful, strong-minded DOUGLAS, or the accomplished, experienced, statesman-like BELL, or the courteous, captivating and eloquent BRECKINRIDGE, the next administration will be more judiciously and wisely conducted, and the integrity of the Union more secure, because of this fact. It is well that the political sphere should be divided by lines of longitude as well as of latitude ; for then we can take our bearings more accurately. There ought to be wisdom enough in the nation to settle impending differences upon a just and equitable basis ; and there is wisdom enough, if we could only bring it practically to bear upon our difficulties. The heart of the people beats loyal yet, and our Constitution is broad enough for us all to stand upon.

One of the most encouraging features in our popular elections is the fact that just as soon as the balloting has determined the final result, there is so general and peaceful an acquiescence in that result. No one ever thinks of keeping up the excitement after the election is over. A few months since, this State was stirred, as it rarely has been before ; men toiled and declaimed, and it is rumored that some were even generous enough to contribute somewhat of their substance to carry the election as they desired. There were anxious faces in the street, earnest consultations in private rooms, tumultuous demonstrations in public halls, flags swinging at every

corner, bands of music playing, torch-light processions, pictorial appeals of somewhat questionable merit, fearful expenditures of printer's ink, laboring men were greeted by their employers with unwonted cordiality, until, on election day, the ferment reached its height, and then you could hear the surging of the waves from Cumberland to Pawcatuck; the whole State was moved to its lowest depths; when, behold, in twenty-four short hours all was as calm and placid as a lake in the still moonlight, and ever since, we have lain quiet in our beds at night, fearing nothing from our young and enterprising Governor, even though we had not the grace to vote for him. So it will be in the coming campaign. We shall hear all sorts of evil threatened on every side, we shall be told that the South will secede, our manufactories be denied their cotton, trade in general be interrupted, if one party carry the day; we shall be told that the slave-roll will be called at Bunker Hill, and our Territories cursed with perpetual servitude if the other party win; but the South will not secede, neither will the good people who reside on Bunker Hill be troubled, however the election may go. We shall all accede to the result, with as good grace as we can; and the defeated party say, with as much cheerfulness as could be expected: "Four years hence we will do better." It has always been so heretofore, and I do not see why it should not be so again.

There is, however, one difficulty which strikes deeper into the foundations of our political fabric, and is more likely to shake the whole superstructure than any casual tempest of party strife. Our country is a refuge for the poor, the oppressed, the discontented, as well as the enterprising inhabitants of the old world, and every year they land upon these shores in countless multitudes. New York is said to be the most cosmopolitan city on the face of the earth ; there is a greater variety of languages spoken there, and a larger proportion of foreigners, in comparison with the native population. And who would wish this current of emigration to be stayed ? We want all these men ; there is room enough for them all ; they have as good a right to come here as our fathers originally had, and the progress of our great improvements would be fatally checked without their aid ; we welcome them all, English, Irish, Scotch, German, French, Italian and Japanese. Come and send for your fathers and mothers and brethren after you get here, as Joseph did when he went down into Egypt. Come and beat us in trade, if you can honestly ; come and help us to develope the resources of our vast country ; come and worship God as you were accustomed to worship Him at home. Come and bring your priests with you ; we will give them a hearty grip of welcome, too, if they will suffer it ; but is it too much for us to ask, if you intend to appear at the ballot-box, more especially if you in-

tend to hold office and regulate our political institutions, is it too much to ask that you will take a little time to study those institutions and inform yourselves as to the nature of our government? Universal suffrage is safe only as it rests upon the basis of universal education. If the great questions of polity which pertain to government, the rights of property, the rights of person, and the rights of opinion, are to be virtually determined by the mere preponderance of numbers; if no questions are to be asked of the voters who hold this responsible power, except "Are you of age and a citizen of the country?" if the vote of the most intelligent and virtuous man in the land may be nullified by the vote of one who has just enough of the element of humanity to keep him from going on four legs,—and this is, in plain terms, what the theory of universal suffrage amounts to,—I can only say that it will require a great deal of wisdom on somebody's part so to work the theory that it shall result in a stable, permanent and elevated government.

Regarding it as a theory, and then considering what is the actual condition in point of intelligence and character of the mass of mankind, it is not so very strange, after all, that even the reformers of older nations are somewhat slow to recognize this as the basis of government. But we are substantially committed to the theory, and it is not easy to see how in a republic it could be

otherwise. Property qualifications, excepting such as are merely nominal, would always be objectionable and odious. Intelligence is not a commodity that can be readily weighed—a man that cannot read, may be wiser than one who reads to no purpose,—and it would be a very delicate business for a public committee, even of Congressmen, to sit in judgment upon the degree of morality requisite to secure the right of suffrage. Our business, then, is to make the best we can of this theory and educate the community up to the serious responsibility which devolves upon them. It seems to be self-evident that, as a matter of social protection, we have a right to demand that every child in the commonwealth should receive the elements of a sound education. A republic, without schools and churches, is a practical impossibility. If it were possible it would be a nuisance. Sunday theatres, and beer saloons, and public dances, and working-mens' associations and caucusses, are a poor substitute for houses of worship and temples of learning.

And here let me observe, that in such a government as ours, it is incumbent upon all intelligent and good men, whatever their vocations, to take an interest in political affairs. They should insist that every party nominate its best members for important offices, and then it would matter comparatively little which party succeeded. Good men in office are more essential than sound platforms, for bad men will knock a hole through

the soundest platform. Instead of the motto, "Principles, not Men," let us have, "Principles *and* Men. If every State in our Union were represented in Washington by her most cultivated, virtuous, high-toned citizens, would there be any cause for fear, whatever party had the ascendancy? It is undoubtedly incumbent upon us to respect our rulers, but they ought not to make the task too difficult. For it is a difficult task, when those whose business it is to make laws habitually break the laws. If they settle their disputes with bludgeons, it cannot astonish us that their constituents sometimes swing the slung-shot. If they stimulate themselves decently for debate, with hot potations, it is very natural that some of the dear people who elected them should occasionally be overtaken with what the law terms *indecent* intoxication. If they are open to pecuniary considerations, it is not strange that a hungry man should once in a while appropriate to himself a few loaves and fishes without a consideration. If they indulge in a vulgar vocabulary and invent slang terms, they must not be surprised if a Rhode Island Secretary of State publishes a new edition of his Dictionary of Americanisms, with incidental quotations from their debates. In our plain republic, we dispense with stars and garters, horse-hair wigs and gowns, and all the regalia of royalty. This hardly seems to warrant our venerable legislators, while in solemn session, in dispensing with the garments

which are usually worn by our citizens in their daily business. In some of these respects, there may be a little need of reform; and it would be well if one of the conditions of election to high office were, that an individual, while in office, should conduct himself as a gentleman.

The only effectual mode of rectifying public abuses amongst us, by elevating public opinion. For public opinion, in our land, is king or tyrant, as the case may be. There is a power surrounding us like an atmosphere, from whose pressure we never escape, and which is inhaled with every breath. It is not the law written on parchment; it is so superior to that as to render the statute very difficult to be executed when it runs ahead of public opinion, and a dead letter, when it falls behind. Neither is it the written creed, which we subscribe with our hand. It sits in judgment upon the formula of faith, as well as upon the civil law, and sometimes destroys its vitality, without disturbing the form—consumes the meat and leaves the shell unbroken. The great purpose of all our editors, lecturers and preachers is to conciliate or modify this public opinion. Some are content merely to reproduce what is understood to be the popular sentiment of those whom they address, and such men are called by their friends, very wise, judicious, and safe; they win great applause, if they can make the commonplaces of opinion seem profound, attractive, beautiful.

They are well paid, secure the best offices, and when they die, have a splendid funeral and are forgotten. Others feel constrained to say what they know to be true and needful, without much regard to the prevailing standard of opinion ; and when they die, there is no marble monument erected over their dust, but their words live, long after all the grave-stones have crumbled. The popular opinion of the world in any given period was the unpopular opinion of a few men, born prematurely some centuries before. How important, then, that we should have in our councils, real statesmen, real men, competent and willing, at whatever cost to themselves, to shape aright the popular sentiment of the nation ; men who can hold a rabble in awe, whether in the street or on the floor of Congress ; who can reprove and rebuke fanatics and fire-eaters, with the calm and overwhelming authority of a WASHINGTON, whose words were sometimes like a two-edged sword, piercing the very joints and marrow.

Popular opinion is always prone to extremes, and regards with great contempt such as are disposed to take the middle path ; towards which, after awhile, the extremes themselves will inevitably converge. Now, I have not a word to say in behalf of that class of persons who evade all responsibility by never taking a positive position, and whenever they are consulted, only shake their owlish heads solemnly, and say with profound gravity : "There is much to be considered on both

sides." I do affirm, however, that in any time of great excitement, when the community are sundered by any serious issue, it requires ten-fold more of moral courage, for one to stand in the breach, calmly proposing modes of reconciliation, mutual conference, reasonable compromise, while the atmosphere is crackling with the thunderbolts of wrath, than it does to plunge into the very hottest of the fray, and shriek with the loudest. The real hero is not the man who despises or defies public opinion, but who seeks to guide it into its right channel, let the temporary injury to his own interests or fame be what it may. One of the best things which the moralist SENECA ever said was this: "No one seems to me to put a higher estimate upon virtue, no one to be more devoted to her cause, than he who is willing to lose the reputation of being a good man, rather than violate his conscience." And if ever there was a period when such men were needed, it is the present. For some of the most serious dangers which now threaten us, come from tendencies to excess *in the right direction*; from counterfeits which need but one stroke of the pen to make genuine. The next thing we shall have to fear will be the reaction that must inevitably follow; the recoil of the gun, after the explosion. Then your moral courage must be shown by resisting the reaction, and claiming that sound progress shall not be stayed, because it has been pushed to excess.

The great use of conservative men is to stay the sudden, premature precipitation of important social changes. For a reform, good in itself, may work only evil, by being wrought out of its time. And we need not fear that a reformative public opinion, when the time has come for its development, will find no opportunity to utter itself. There was no free press in France, when the corruption of the Court and the Church, stirred those first faint murmurs, which afterwards broke out in the awful howl of the Revolution ; but, notwithstanding this, the people found or invented modes to express their indignation. The painted crockery on the dinner table, the pictures on their snuff-boxes, the paper that lined the walls of their houses, the carvings on the ceiling, the cards with which they played their loo and cribbage, were all made symbolical of the follies and outrages of the ruling powers. If hidden fire burns, smoke will find its way through some crevice ; the earth will crack somewhere, when the elements are seething in the depths.

The virtues in which, as a nation, we are most wanting, are *patience* and *faith*. The republic is yet young, but during our brief existence we have seen such wonders wrought, we have grown so huge, we have accumulated capital so fast, we have triumphed over so many obstacles, that, with the brave enterprise of youth, we have acquired not a little of its conceit. We are sometimes thought to over glorify ourselves somewhat, on

occasions like the present. The American Eagle has been called upon to perform feats far beyond the capacity of the most patriotic bird.

I think that our present danger lies in the direction of despondency. I fear there is a growing class amongst us who begin to despair of this republic. Their apprehensions do not assume any definite form ; if this Union is to be dissolved, they cannot say where the line of separation will run, or how the division is to be brought about ; if we must fall back into monarchy or a military despotism, it is not possible to see how the first king that sits upon our throne is to be designated, except by a popular vote, and there is at present no very prominent warrior in the nation of a character to alarm us. But they say, so long as this terrible question of Slavery continues to agitate us, proclaimed to be a sin against God in one section, and an essential institution of the Gospel in another ; so long as we have so much corruption in high places and so much ignorance and irreligion in low places ; so long as the preponderance of power in our larger cities lies with those who are utterly incompetent to exercise it aright, we are in an unsafe and precarious condition. That there are great dangers growing out of all this we must admit, and they ought to excite every good citizen, and especially every Christian, to put forth renewed exertions for the elevation and sanctification of the people. Let the pulpit speak

more directly to the hearts of men, and bring the blessed, renewing truths of religion closer home to the conscience; let those who control the periodical press, that mighty engine of influence, cease to pander to a corrupt and vulgar taste; let them be more scrupulous in their treatment of those who are appointed to rule over us, while they never fail to rebuke sin and fraud, whoever may be the transgressors; let our glorious system of public schools be plied with more efficiency; let parents train their children with greater care, and set them a better example; let there be a more living sympathy between the rich and the poor, and we will still outride the storm, and find safe anchorage at last. I believe that our foundations yet stand firm, and that God means we shall accomplish our destiny. The work that our fathers inaugurated with such a solemn sacrifice of blood, must not, and shall not fail.

One great fact distinguishes our condition. No man among us feels the presence of government unless he offends against the law as a criminal. So long as we behave ourselves, we are as independent of our rulers as they are of us. They cannot touch our honest gains. They cannot prescribe our personal movements. They cannot control our opinions. They cannot hinder the public utterance of these opinions. We have no press-gang, no conscription, no levying upon our goods by absolute authority. The rights of property are perfectly

secure, and if our Congress did not meet again for ten years to come, we should probably be as well off as we are to day—perhaps better.

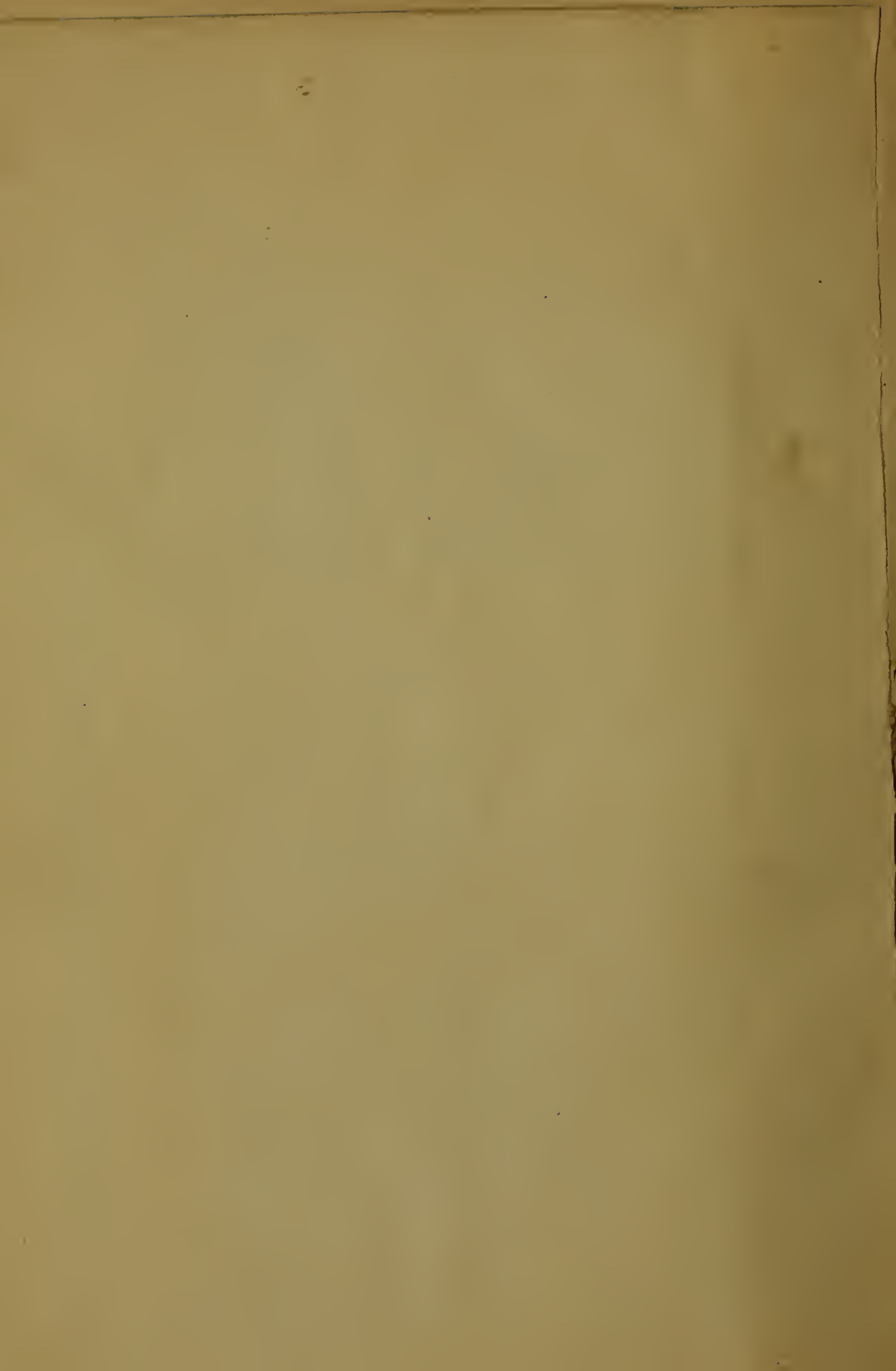
We have our periodical political uproars, but nobody is harmed if we keep out of harm's way. The nation is vastly richer now than it ever was before. We have comparatively little poverty but such as is imported. We have multitudes of hospitals, asylums, retreats, reform schools, and a Church of some sort for every six hundred people in the United States. Our prisons are wonderfully improved. Missionaries are promptly sent to our destitute regions. There is not a gigantic moral evil amongst us but there is also a gigantic effort to control and exterminate it. Why should we despair? Do the signs of the times indicate that God has deserted us?

Fellow citizens of Rhode Island: two hundred and twenty-four years ago, there was a declaration of independence made upon your soil, in which the rights of the soul as well as of the body, the freedom of the will as well as of the hand, were vindicated from the narrowness and tyranny of the past. We keep no anniversary in commemoration of that event, one of the grandest in all history. And we had almost lost sight of the burial-place of the great man who anticipated the charter of modern liberty. Monuments have been erected in memory of awful butcheries, and there are noble statues

abroad in honor of men who never knew what it was to be noble or honorable. But there is not a slab of marble in the State with the name of ROGER WILLIAMS inscribed upon it,—not even a stone to mark his grave. This reproach you now intend to take away. You are pledged to build a monument to that man's memory; and not only so, but in testimony of the fact that after a fair trial of two centuries, you continue to stand by his principles. Let it be worthy of the man, worthy of the doctrine he upheld, worthy of the State. There is not a commonwealth on the face of the earth, in whose history—I was about to say—there is less to be ashamed of; I will rather say, more to be proud of—than there is in the records of Rhode Island and these Providence Plantations. No Indian tribe ever cursed you; no man ever suffered here for conscience sake. You have a narrow territory—not over fertile, but you have grown very rich. God has prospered you abundantly. Now do something that will make your children proud. Build a column that will stand when the State has grown old; a work of art that will elevate the taste and quicken the patriotism of our citizens to the latest generation. For, remember, the principles which that column is intended to commemorate, are as eternal as God, and as unchangeable as truth.

Fellow citizens: the symbol of our State is an anchor, and this means “sure and steadfast.” Our watchword

is "Hope." We are bound never to despair of the Republic. The labor of the past has not been lost: the labor of to-day is not in vain. No holy word, no righteous act can ever die. Be hopeful. We are moving on towards high noon ;—hardly out of the twilight yet, it may be,—but, thank God, it is the twilight of the morning, not of the evening. And the hour hand on the great dial-plate of time never goes back. Slowly and silently, except when it strikes, at long intervals, the progressive epochs of the world, it advances towards the meridian.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 801 776 6 ·

